

ADMINISTRATOR MINUTE

At last Wednesday's Council meeting, the mountain biking and Welby landfill restoration project was listed for consideration to provide an update on progress, with the report highlighting interim measures with local mountain biking group – Highlands Trails.

The report was seeking a decision of Council to cap the former Welby Tip to allow for passive and active recreation to enable mountain bike trails. This work complements other initiatives in the Shire at Wingello and Penrose to increase mountain biking opportunities locally. This followed the unauthorised mountain bike trails at Mt Gibraltar and offered a positive outcome.

At the meeting, I indicated that it was an unfortunate coincidence that the report was listed when there was new illegal activity at Mt Gibraltar and that I had met with members of the volunteer group and seen first hand the illegal works being undertaken.

While no notice was given, I took the view that it was appropriate to raise the new illegal works, however did not alter the Council staff recommendation. I was wrong and it could be implied from my questions of staff that Highlands Trails was associated with the new illegal works; however, during the discussion the Director Service and Project Delivery advised Council there was no affiliation.

I attach for the record a copy of correspondence from Mr Kopetko and Mr Cooper for information.

There is no question that my decision robbed the individuals representing Highlands Trails and volunteer workers the opportunity during the Public Forum of making representations in relation to the matter (and it could be said that a similar scenario applies to the Mt Gibraltar bushcare group) and my questioning of stakeholder groups as opposed to individuals did not assist.

In short, I have devalued the role of the Highlands Trails group and all individual volunteers associated with them, not to mention Council staff who have worked hard to address an issue in relation to active recreation that has plagued this Shire for years.

On Monday, I met at the Welby site with Jordan Kopetko, Adam Cooper, Dennis Garbutt and Council's Asset Manager to see first hand the work that is being undertaken and the way that it responds to the environmental sensitivities of the area. The meeting afforded me the opportunity to apologise personally for not allowing submissions to be made and any negativity that may be attributed and this Minute allows me to record the same formally.

Many organisations and individuals give freely of their time for the benefit of this Shire and work within guidelines provided by the Council and the Highlands Trails group is no different.

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL
Wednesday, 27 March 2024



Rangers only react to complaints on weekends through the Council's after hour emergency number and in my view this does not provide an adequate service and the General Manager has assured me that the matter is being addressed.

Attachment 1

From: Jordan Kopetko
Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2024 5:09 PM
To: Shaun Robinson; Graham Clark; Jessica Kaiser
Subject: Welby volunteer built Gravity trail

Hi Shaun and Graham

(And Jessica please see this gets to the GM Lisa)

In light of the statements made from Viv may at this afternoons council meeting - I won't be moving forward on volunteer works for establishing the finalisation of this gravity facility.

Council strategically changed the agenda of tonight's meeting - with Viv refusing myself the ability to make comment. Furthermore my services free of charge will no longer be available.

If you require the finalisation of this spot - my rate is \$250 an hour + gst which will utilise machinery to finalise location. Estimated 30 hours of machinery work to have this facility completed. Alternatively - please feel free to organise volunteers to work free of charge to finalise the spot.

I won't be playing the games of the hierarchy for political bias as someone who has worked tirelessly for council free of charge to make this possible. Viv may showing up to activist groups volunteer days whilst nobody from council has bothered to show up to our volunteer days really stamps it down. Then turning around a seemingly positive agenda to appease to land care activists is the nail in the coffin for my free volunteer work.

All the best in trying to finalise the facility. & yes, I will be publicly making this known.

Regards

Jordy.

Attachment 2

From: Adam Cooper

Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2024 12:26 PM

To: Administrator Office

Subject: Clarification on Gib Trail statements from Mar 20 meeting

Hi Viv,

In the 20th March Ordinary Council Meeting, it was mentioned that council had been working with stakeholders - Trail Craft and Highlands Trails - on the remediation and future plans for the Welby Mountain Bike facilities. After this point was made, you raised concerns about continued illegal trail activity at the Gib, and asked whether said stakeholders were involved.

By posing the question, the implication that Highlands Trails is either actively or tacitly involved in the construction of illegal trails is now on the record.

Whilst the council member clarified that Highlands Trails was not involved, there was no acknowledgment of this by yourself, only that you felt personally let down - it was up to those in attendance to determine whether you were let down by Highlands Trails, council staff, or the situation in general.

I'd like to remind you that Highlands Trails is not, and never has been, involved with the building of illegal trails on Mt Gibraltar. Highlands Trails stepped in - when council was unsure how to handle the situation - with a solution that would be beneficial to all parties involved. We have no jurisdiction over activities in the Gib, and more broadly, have no visibility of what's going on there.

Implying that Highlands Trails is involved in illegal trail building activity tarnishes our reputation and puts future projects at risk. The Southern Villages Iconic Trail - a Strategic Priority for Wingecarribee Council - requires the approval of many stakeholders, including NPWS. If Highlands Trails is seen to be acting inappropriately in an environmental context, it's highly likely that this project won't be able to move forward.

I'm hoping you can offer a clarification to the record on your statements - and explicitly state Highlands Trails' position on illegal trails - as soon as possible.

Kind Regards,

Adam Cooper

President

[Highlands Trails](#)